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MYTHOLOGY

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Two distinct attitudes about these creatures are displayed by the Washo. Most informants openly admitted being afraid of Water Babies. If they heard one they remained in their houses or attempted to avoid contact. They claimed that if a person saw a Water Baby by accident, at the very least he would be struck unconscious and greater harm, in the form of sickness, might be inflicted on him or on one of his relatives. The general attitude was that Water Babies were best left alone because they were extremely powerful.

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This attitude is perhaps summed up best by one of my informants, a rather sophisticated Washo who has lived in cities for long periods and who is an active leader in the tribe's legal battle with the federal government. He is also a devoted peyotist who often conducts curing ceremonies and is conceded to have a curing power. He said, "If they ever get up a bunch to trap one of them [Water Babies], I don't want to have nothing to do with it." When I asked why not, he replied: "Why hell, if you make one of them things mad they'll flood the world. I just don't want nothing to do with them. I ain't that desperate." I asked, "desperate for what?" and he replied "for power. I like to dream about womens [sic] and things like that, not about Water Babies and that funny stuff."

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This last statement clearly indicates the other attitude about Water Babies; they are often guardian spirits of Washo who have special power, particularly shamanistic curing power. Another informant expressed this other attitude about these creatures. He is about seventy, attended Stewart Indian School for ten years and lived among the Hopi for ten years. He boasts a stone and cement-block home, the only such dwelling owned by a Washo. He has learned to bead baskets and during most of the year earns a reasonable income from this. His seeming adjustment to white culture is confounded when his philosophic position is examined. He can only be termed a mystic who interprets the world in Indian terms. Exposure to such influences as the writings of Kroeber and Huxley has only confirmed his essentially Indian viewpoint. Both his parents were famous Indian doctors and his maternal uncle, who was also his mentor,¹ was a famous shaman. My informant implied that his uncle's spirit (wegeleyo), from which his power was derived, was the Water Baby, and his own carefully guarded statement implied that the creature was potentially his own spirit. His view of the Water Baby was quite the reverse of other informants. "Some people think the Water Baby will hurt them, but he won't. If they see him by accident he won't do nothing. But if he has given you his power and you see him—then wham, he maybe knock you right down." This appears to have been his way of describing a seizure by the Water Baby, which although a fearful experience, usually resulted in the gift of additional power. There was, how-

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¹This statement should not be considered as an indication of matrilineality in Washo society. Fried and d'Arvedo, who have done extensive work in kinship and social organization of this group, seemed to agree that the Washo were loosely bilateral with certain formalized patrilineal elements. However, because of fragile marriages, many Washo have had a longer and closer association with their mothers' families than with their fathers', or with those of any of their mothers' subsequent husbands.

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Modern Washo seem less willing than their forebears to weave Coyote into tales but are no less conscious of his malevolent presence. Peyotists often see visions or dream of Coyote (d'Azevedo and Merriam 1937), and quick asides about Coyote's influence are apt to come up in conversation either as tentative jokes or in seriousness. One tale of a modern occurrence involving Coyote did come my way through the kindness of Warren d'Azevedo. His informant was the brother-in-law of my own informant and, like his kinsman, a semimystic, very conscious of his Indianness and credited by other Washo with powers beyond those of an ordinary man in hunting.

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"I was staying in this shack with the guy who owned it. One night he didn't come home but I kept hearing something walking around that shack. The next morning when that guy came home he was all tired out and there was Coyote tracks all around that shack. I got my gun and told that guy to stay away from me" (d'Azevedo).

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The Ag, a huge man-eating bird described in Lowie's myth number 13, is no longer alive, but according to several informants the creature's bones or at least the island on which it nested can be seen by people flying over the lake because they are only a bit below the surface. Washo insist that white airplane pilots see the shape of the island daily but keep silent because they don't want to confirm an Indian story. One day on a trip around Lake Tahoe my Indian companion, a sometime leader among the Washo asked: "If we get that money from our claim do you think one of them archeologist fellas could go down under the water and find that there an bird's skeleton?"

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The foregoing paragraphs illustrate the tenacity with which Washo mythology has maintained itself among these people. The entirety of many of the myths is no longer part of the repertoire of every adult Washo, but variations, on-the-spot reconstructions, and the introduction of mythological themes into contemporary stories of a secular nature are definitely part of the oral literature of the Washo.

It is interesting to note that some aspects of Washo mythology appear to have more viability than others. Thus the Water Baby remains an important and vital aspect of modern Washo life, as does the Coyote. The twin weasels have lost much of their appeal, as has the giant Hangawuiui. The giants of the mountains are acknowledged to be alive today but are seldom referred to, whereas Coyote and Water Baby are almost always mentioned and spoken of as living entities even by the most progressive Washo.

Except for the making of offerings to nature, which may be defined as purely religious, other religious or ritual activities dealing with what we would call the supernatural are so integrated with other aspects of Washo life as to be almost inseparable. Thus in describing the religious activities of the Washo I will proceed through various phases of their life, pointing out the ritual actions which are part of Washo behavior in specific situations.

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a dream that tells you how to handle your paraphernalia. Sometime a dream tells you that you have to be all alone in your house. I don't know what happens in there but some of them doctors, I think, go over to visit the dead for a little while.

"After you been dreaming for a long time maybe you try to cure somebody but you don't ask for nothing. You never tell them dreams or what your spirit is but other doctors, they know. If your dreams are right you can cure people and then you can ask for something [payment]. The real Indian way was to doctor for four nights. Then he'd lay out all his stuff and give it a drink by sprinkling water on it. Then he'd shake his rattle and sing and touch the patient with his hands. He'd talk to the sickness, like he knew it . . . like maybe he was friends to it . . . he'd say 'now you behave and don't bother this person no more. If you don't behave I'm gonna take you out and show you to everybody and then you'll be embarrassed!' Then he'd suck at the patient (some of these young doctors suck on a stick with a feather on it that they pointed at the sick person, but the old ones didn't do that), and get out the sickness, it would be a feather or a stone. Sometime that sickness come out and go into the doctor so hard they can't get it out and have to get another doctor to help him. Sometimes it hit them so hard that they defecate. I seen them doctors just fill their pants. If it's real tough they get all stiff and fall over. Sometimes fall right in the fire and their clothes all burn off but it don't burn them none. You can't touch them then or it will kill them. But when they begin to shake a little and that rattle begins to go then you can pick them up. If he can, the doctor will vomit out the sickness. When it's out he puts it in his hand and rubs it with dirt and throws it away toward the north; that kills it."

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This recital of the process of becoming a doctor shows clearly the ideal situation, the receiving of powers, unsought, from supernatural sources, the guardian spirit watching over its protégé's career, providing him with the wherewithal in the form of songs, spells, and paraphernalia. In fact, however, it would appear that the process of becoming a shaman was far more a conscious and voluntary act on the part of an individual than would be supposed from the foregoing story.

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Doctoring power clearly seems to have remained within certain families. The informant who gave the foregoing account was himself the son of a woman curer and a famous doctor and the nephew of another doctor. From his childhood he was familiar with the procedures of curing, with stories about dreams, spirit visitations, trips to the afterworld, mysterious and sacred locations. He somewhat proudly admitted that as a boy he "used to shake that rattle" himself. In short, until his shamanistic education was interrupted by white man's schooling, he was a shaman's apprentice.

This view is supported by the statements of other informants: "Of course them people that is from a doctor family, they have dreams and get curing power," said one rather assimilated woman of about seventy-five. Another informant, a man of sixty, who repeatedly indicated his fear of "power" but at the same time was reputed to be an important curer in the peyote church said: "If you come from a family of dreamers there ain't nothing you can do. You're trapped by it." Young shamans appear to have undergone a period

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the cloudless sky overhead.

Older white residents speak of Indian rainmakers, which is a source of much amusement among the Washo. Until a few years ago an Indian, who still lives in Dresslerville, used to take advantage of the gullibility or generosity of white ranchers by performing "rain dances" on their property in return for handouts of food. The Washo generally frowned on this, but because white men were the victims of the fraud it was considered harmless.

The father of the false rainmaker was a diviner of stolen articles. His method was to sit and smoke until the location of the desired article was revealed to him.

OBJECTS OF POWER

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Eagle and magpie feathers were considered to be the most powerful items of a shaman's paraphernalia. Doctors are reported to have captured eagles and even to have tried to raise them to obtain feathers (223-231). The tail feathers were the most prized. Eagle feathers were extremely valuable and could be traded for anything including "a woman or a sack of pine-nut flour or anything worth a lot." Ideally the eagle was tied up until the shaman removed three tail feathers. The doctor then tied a string of beads to the bird's leg and released it as a messenger to the spirits. Description of eagle-down costumes suggest that birds were stripped of many more feathers than the ideal three. In historic times individuals have attempted to contain eagles. One old man in Woodfords is well known for having kept them on cradle-boards for easy transport, but such experiments usually ended in failure. Magpie feathers were considered less powerful than eagle feathers but still were highly prized. Today they are gathered by chance—taken from dead birds on the highway or picked up where they were shed.

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In the past, eagle and magpie feathers were important parts of the dress of warriors. Magpie feathers were used to make a feather cap with a single feather suspended from the top. Informants recall their elders' describing eagle feathers' being suspended individually from the upper arms and thighs of particularly powerful warriors.

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Modern peyotists have lost none of the traditional Washo feeling about these feathers. The ceremonial fans of road chiefs, believed the only persons capable of handling the immense power, are made of eagle feathers. Other peyotists favor the less powerful but nonetheless potent magpie feather (d'Azevedo and Merriam 1957).

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Tobacco, as the foregoing accounts illustrate, played an important part in Washo shamanism. It appears to have been used as an offering to the spirits. In addition it is clear that it was felt to have special power of its own. Today older men smoke sparingly and are often somewhat embarrassed to be offered a cigarette casually during conversation. In prewhite times the tobacco was a native variety gathered and dried by the shaman. Today Bull Durham appears to have replaced the wild variety as "Indian" tobacco. The Indians seemed delighted to see me rolling a cigarette; they acted as if I were mastering what they felt was a particularly Indian art. Bull Durham is also important in peyote ceremonialism because it is "real Indian tobacco."

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Incense cedar plays an important role in modern peyote meetings. It is dried and thrown into the fire to create a fragrant smoke which is considered bene-

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ficial. Meeting officials, fan it into the atmosphere and "rub" themselves in the smoke to obtain power or purification. This has a connection with traditional Washo ritual, but the relationship is unclear and the aboriginal practices obscure. One group of Washo, which was assigned a special place in the large camp circle formed during the pine-nut dances held at Double Springs Flats in the late nineteenth century, is said to have special rights in connection with cutting cedar. Modern informants do not have a clear picture of what the rights were or what the customs surrounding cedar were. One informant did say that if the cedar "bunch" found anyone else with cedar they would say "you aren't supposed to have that" and would make fun of them. She could offer no further details or explanations.

SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT

(2562-2564)

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There is no real distinction in the Washo mind between a doctor and a sorcerer or witch. Particularly powerful doctors were able to kill their enemies. One of the most feared bits of paraphernalia was an obsidian point found by a doctor. These large points were not made by Washo and are apparently remnants of some previous cultural occupation in the area. If a Washo finds one point up he carefully knocks it over with a long stick before touching it. These points are called mankillers, but I was unable to learn exactly how they were used. They are still viewed with a certain amount of awe, and the finding of a large point in a sandpit in Smith Valley was known in Woodfords, fifty miles away.

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Sorcery was used to explain the abandonment of an ancient campsite at Dangberg's Hot Springs. This site is a trove of grinding stones, points, and other Washo artifacts. Formerly there were numerous skeletons in the area, according to both Indian and white informants. However, the site has not been occupied in historic times because of the following incident.

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"One winter there was a lot of Washos camped around the hot springs. My old aunt was camped there. There was this northern Washo [from Sierra Valley] came into the camp. Nobody know'd him and nobody would feed him. But my old aunt fed him. But he was mad at them people so he went to Markleville and made a lot of medicine. [Why he went to Markleville is unclear. This is the site of another hot springs, a fact which may figure in the magic used.] After he made medicine for a while he kind of spit on his fingers and pointed at Dangberg Hot Springs. Right where he pointed all the grass got brown; you can still see that line of brown if you know where to look, and a lot of Indians died. Nobody ever went back there. My old aunt she didn't die."

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Only one Washo disputed this story. She, a very progressive old woman and sometime Christian, attributed the deaths to an epidemic and "didn't think" the doctor was responsible.

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Witchcraft and sorcery among the present-day Washo is a difficult subject to investigate. Even among themselves it is treated with extreme indirection and veiled hints. In discussing the problem with d'Azevedo I found that we were in agreement that a number of

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I've heard that they cook it and eat it . . . not only here but up north. After they get the rifle they get to killing bears around here but hardly ever hear of dividing up the bear meat."

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This last remark appears to be significant as all informants emphasized that Indians shared food equally. Thus a statement made voluntarily that bear meat was not shared suggests different attitudes about bears.

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Another informant adds the detail that when the bear left his lair, the companions of the man who entered the den would block the entrance so the bear could not return. The first man to place an arrow in the animal could claim it and get the hide. This informant also added at this point: "It's funny that the fella who went inside was just an ordinary fella [emphasis mine]." He also insisted that after a bear was killed the hunting party painted their faces black. Other informants claimed not to know of this or said such painting was done when a mink was killed but they did not know why.

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One traditional story (Dangberg) sheds a bit more light on the bear. In this tale a group of Washo were camped near a band of Paiute who challenged the Washo to fight. Instead of fighting, the Washo drove a bear from its den and killed it and thus defeated the Paiute.

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I had all but given up the pursuit of information on the bear, being convinced that my informants either honestly did not know any more (the bear having been relatively rare in this area for a good many years) or were unwilling to discuss something of an extremely sacred nature, when a chance remark suggested at least part of the explanation.

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A pioneer white resident who had lived in Alpine County, California, for ninety years casually mentioned that every Indian man who was buried during his boyhood was wrapped in a bearskin shroud. This, coupled with an earlier mention of "rough" men having bearskins, suggests that the killing of a bear represented the ultimate in Washo bravery and the possession of the skin conferred extra powers on the owner. The rifle made such acquisitions much less hazardous and in the late nineteenth century it had become common for Indians to own a bearskin cloak, which became their most prized possession and was buried with them.

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Stewart's element lists show no evidence of any formalized bear cult among the Washo. However, Smith's notes, which Stewart used, report a bear shaman who impersonated a bear (2558). Certainly the bear was one of the spirits who could give power to a man destined to become a shaman. Bear shamanism is reported only for the Fish Spring Valley Paiute by Stewart and for the Tago and Wada Northern Paiute by Stewart. These three groups constitute the only ones having formalized bear ceremonialism of any sort in the Basin. The bear dance and a note about impersonating bears (Stewart 1941, pp. 286, 322) suggest that formalized bear ceremonialism came into the Basin from the Rocky Mountains via the Ute and Bannock. However, Kroeber reports awe of the bear, special euphemisms for them, and ritualized secrecy about hunting them among the Miwok which seem more closely related to Washo behavior. Bear impersonators among the Battle Mountain Paiute were credited with invulnerability in war, which is reminiscent of the use of a bear-hide cloak by Washo "rough men." Although it is not possible to make any conclusive statement about the role of the bear in the supernatural life of

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I. THE WASHO INDIANS

This chapter is a brief summary of what is known of aboriginal Washo culture, except for social organization, together with the principal changes it has undergone since the coming of the whites. The most significant characteristic of Washo acculturation from the point of view of this study has been the progressive individualization of the society. This can be seen most clearly in their economic life, where the old, cooperative methods of earning a livelihood have given way to individual wage work. The trend toward individualism has also affected ceremonial. The major ceremony of the year, the pine-nut dance, has been given up; and curing is less a group affair than it once was, with the exception of the peyotists, who constitute approximately ten per cent of the tribal membership. Warfare, another activity requiring group cooperation, was abandoned shortly after the coming of the whites. The effects upon social organization of this trend toward individualism will be traced in the following chapters.

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INFORMANTS

The sketch of Washo culture which follows is based primarily upon the sources listed below and upon data which I gathered directly in the field. My principal informants were the following: Nancy Emm, Clara Frank, Bertha Holbrook, and Hank Pete, all of Dresslerville, Nevada; Roy James, Woodfords, California; Caesar John, Markleeville, California; and Henry Rupert, Carson City, Nevada.

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SOURCES

Ethnographic accounts of the Washo are few. The principal ones are by Barrett (1917), Curtis (1926), and Lowie (1939). Stewart (1944) and Siskin (MS) have contributed two excellent studies of Washo peyotism, and Kroeber (1907) has published a brief sketch of the Washo language, which contains a list of kinship terms. Other major sources are Dangberg's (1927) collection of myths, Kroeber's (1925) brief summary of the then available data on Washo culture, Stewart's (1941) list of cultural elements, and Heizer and Elsasser's (1953) study of the archaeology of the central Sierra Nevada.

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LOCATION

The Washo Indians are a small, isolated group who speak a language tentatively placed in the Hokan stock (Sapir, 1929, p. 139). In aboriginal times they occupied the extreme western edge of Nevada and eastern California. The eastern part of their territory lay in the Great Basin and the western part in the Sierra Nevada. Aboriginal Washo territory extended from Honey Lake in the north to Sonora Pass in the south. The eastern boundary ran from Sonora Pass northward along the crest of the Pine Nut Mountains; it then turned west

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PREFACE

A CULTURE-ELEMENT SURVEY consuming four months among the Northern Paiute and Washo in 1936 and another one among the Ute, Goshute, and Southern Paiute in 1937-1938, for the University of California, prepared me for this study. Among the Ute, I attended three peyote meetings, gaining information that way and also in other ways concerning the peyote cult. I incorporated the material in a paper entitled Ute Peyotism, accepted for publication by *Anthropos*. The chance encounter in a Ute peyote meeting at Randlett, Utah, with Ben Lancaster, who introduced peyote to the Washo and the Northern Paiute, and Sam Dick, his first convert and principal assistant, facilitated subsequent research.

My first experience with Washo-Paiute peyotism was made possible by Dr. S. F. Cook, who invited me in July, 1938, to accompany him on a field trip. On that expedition we talked of peyote with Indians from Reno to Bishop, and made fruitless inquiry concerning it from Bishop, around the southern Sierra Nevada, to Yosemite. We were fortunate in being able to attend a peyote meeting conducted by Sam Dick near Mono Lake. As a result of that short visit in July, which revealed the possibilities of more intensive study, I received a grant from the University of California to allow me to spend five weeks, beginning October 14, 1938, among the Washo and Northern Paiute. The greater part of the data in this monograph was obtained at that time. It was then I attended another peyote meeting, conducted by Ben Lancaster at Carson City.

I wish especially to thank Dr. A. L. Kroeber and the other faculty members of the Department of Anthropology of the University of California who made possible the field work upon which this study is based. Special appreciation for assistance and hospitality is due Miss Alida C. Bowler, Superintendent of the Carson Indian Agency, and Indian Service employees who assisted me on innumerable occasions. To my Indian informants I owe a considerable debt, for they gave freely of their time and information.

Much assistance and encouragement have been received from several colleagues who have patiently listened as I expounded my views or who have read and criticized parts of my manuscript. Besides my dissertation committee comprising Professors A. L. Kroeber, Carl O. Sauer, and R. L. Olson, I owe thanks to Professors J. Gilbert McAllister and George Engerrand, of the University of Texas, Professor R. H. Lowie and Dr. T. D. McCown, of the University of California, and Dr. Homer G. Barnett, of the University of Oregon; and to Dr. Demitri Shimkin for placing at my disposal material concerning peyotism among the Wind River Shoshone and has otherwise aided me through stimulating discussions.

I also wish to thank the following ethnographers who supplied data for the peyote element distribution list in Appendix II: J. Gilbert McAllister, Weston La Barre, E. Adamson Hoebel, John A. Noon, Erminie W. Voegelin, Alexis A. Praus, Fred Voget, Demitri Shimkin, and Carling Malouf.

Mrs. C. A. Block, Editorial Assistant, Anthropology Department, University of California, worked over the manuscript several times and her invaluable assistance is greatly appreciated. My wife, Lenore, has given editorial and stenographic aid.

O. C. S.

Element	Occurrence														
	IT	K-A	Klo	Com	Klo	Ab S	De 1	De 2	Win	No C	Cr 1	Cr 2	WBS	Ula	Gas
181. Water bearer spills water on ground	+	-	+		+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
182. Bucket passed clockwise, all drink	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
183. Devotees rub, sprinkle ("baptize") selves with water	+	-	+		-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
184. "Chief peyote," paraphernalia sprinkled	+	-	+		-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
185. Water bearer takes water outside	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
186. Makes circuit of altar before removing water	+		+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
187. Drum, staff returned to place they occupied before midnight	+		+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
188. After paraphernalia placed, leader goes outside	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
189. Blows whistle to cardinal directions	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
190. Prays to cardinal directions	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
191. Leader incensed upon return	+		+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
192. Replaces whistle near moon	+		+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+
193. After midnight individual fans, rattles, etc., used	+		+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
194. All urged during meeting to eat as much peyote as possible		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
195. Urged not to eat too much		+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
196. Individual prayers aloud, by men	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
197. By women		+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
198. Suppliant first gets tobacco from leader	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
199. Cigarette lighted with fire stick	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
200. 4 puffs of smoke blown toward altar at start	+		+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
201. Butt handed to leader			+	+	(-)	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
202. To cedarman, who blows 4 puffs toward altar			+	+	(-)	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
203. To chief drummer, who blows 4 puffs toward altar			+	+	(-)	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
204. Handed back to leader, who blows 4 puffs toward altar			+	+	(-)	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
205. Prayer by individual followed by one by leader		+	+	+	(-)	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
206. No one leaves meeting while anyone is singing, praying, or eating peyote	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
207. Morning water call (similar procedure to midnight ritual)	+	+	+	+	(+)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
208. Water brought in	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
209. By woman	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Element: Washo-Northern Paiute Peyotism

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